



Montgomery County Council

From the office of Councilmember Tom Perez

News Release

February 19, 2003

Contact: Dan Parr 240-777-7954

Perez Supports In-State Tuition for Immigrant College Students

Councilmember Tom Perez today called on the state to provide immigrant students equal opportunity to an affordable college education by allowing them access to in-state tuition rates at the University of Maryland and other schools of higher learning.

Testifying in support of a bill (HB253) before a legislative committee in Annapolis, Perez said hundreds of immigrant high school and undergraduate students face critical obstacles in pursuing their dreams because they are ineligible to take advantage of lower in-state tuition costs. Many of the students have attended elementary and secondary schools in Maryland for most of their lives, he said, but if they want to attend the University of Maryland or another state college, they are required as immigrants to pay higher out-of-state tuition rates.

“We have made a commitment to raise academic expectations in K-12 to prepare all of our students for the challenges of the 21st century. We have a legal obligation to make the same commitment to hundreds of immigrant high school students who have made Maryland their home,” said Perez, who noted that his appearance before the committee was in an individual capacity, not on behalf of the County Council nor the university system where he is an assistant professor at the University of Maryland Law School.

Sponsored by state Delegates Sheila Hixson (D-20th), chair of the House Ways and Means Committee, and Victor Ramirez (D-47th), the bill would allow immigrants access to in-state tuition rates if they have lived in Maryland for three years, and certify they will apply to adjust their immigration status promptly upon becoming eligible. The bill has broad support among Republicans and Democrats, including 18 members of the Montgomery County delegation.

Four other states with high concentrations of immigrants - California, Texas, Utah and New York - have passed similar legislation.

“There is consensus in Maryland and across America that we must leave no child behind,” Perez said. “We must not leave any high school graduate behind either.”

#